**Telephone interview with LCDR Samuel Robert Sherman, MC, USN, flight surgeon USS *Franklin*. Awarded Navy Cross for action aboard USS *Franklin*. Conducted by: Mr. Jan Kenneth Herman, BUMED Historian, 29 April 1993.**

**I want to talk about your earlier career before I get to the incidents involving the USS *Franklin*. You joined, I understand, after Pearl Harbor.**

Right. The day after. I was turned down twice before Pearl Harbor because I had never been in a ROTC reserve unit. During medical school, they gave those of us who wanted to be in a unit the opportunity to do that. But the stipulation was you had to go to camp each summer for two weeks or so and then you had to go through sort of meetings or drills maybe twice a month or so over weekends. I was one of those unfortunate guys who had to work my way through college and medical school. I needed those times in
order to earn the money to pay my tuition. So, I could never join the unit. So, when most of my classmates were called up prior to Pearl Harbor, I felt quite guilty, and I went first to Letterman Hospital to see if I could get into the Army unit. They flunked me, and then I went to the Navy recruiting office and they flunked me for two reasons which were very, very minor. One is I had my nose broken a half dozen times while I was boxing and the inside of my nose was so obstructed and the cecum was so crooked and busted up that they didn't think I had enough good breathing air there. Then, also I had lost some teeth in front when I was boxing and I had to use a partial denture. So, I couldn't pass the approximate teeth test.

So, the day after Pearl Harbor, I went in there and they welcomed me with open arms.

**I bet they did. Were you from the San Francisco area?**

I was born in Stockton which was about 90 miles from there, but I went to UC Berkeley in 1925 and I got my A.B. degree and then I went over to University California Medical School in San Francisco graduated from there in 1933 and did my internship and residency both there and at another hospital called Mt. Zion. I was in practice for almost 10 years when Pearl Harbor happened.

**Were you a general surgeon?**

Yes. I had had my training in mostly trauma surgery which came in very handy on the Franklin. I had spent 2 years in our trauma center of the emergency hospital and I did all of my work in that respect. But that's how I got in. After I got into their office there they gave me a physical. They said you've got 10 days to close your office and get commissioned. At that time, I was sent to Treasure Island station for just the indoctrination. And then because I had been a civilian pilot they figured that maybe I would happier and the Navy would be happy with me if they sent me to Alameda Naval Air Station which is not too far away from there. So, I was sent there and was put in charge of surgery and the clinical services. Then, all of a sudden one day the team medical officer came in and said, "When are you going to get through with this operation?"

I said, "In about a half hour."

He said, "Well, you better hurry up because I just got orders for you to go to Pensacola to get flight surgeon's training."

**How did you feel about that?**

I loved it. I had been after him day and night because airplanes were the love of my life, you see.

**You had gotten a pilot's license earlier?**

My wife and I were both private pilots in San Francisco from about 1936 on. I had my own little airfield and my own couple little planes and that was my hobby. I loved it. So, I wanted to be working around airplanes even though while I was at the Naval Air Station Alameda they wouldn't let me near an airplane. They said you're more valuable to us doing surgery because all these youngsters came in. They took them in from the draft or from volunteers. They had hernias and they had pardinital(?) cysts. They had this and they had that and we had to clean them all up there. But anyhow, I had four hours to go home and get packed and get on a train and go to Pensacola. I did my flight surgeon training there. I was told I was going to be shipped out from the East coast, but they changed it and had me go back to the West coast and await for an air group at Alameda Naval Air Station. That's why I got with Air Group 5.

**What year was that?**

Late 1943.

**You had gone through the flight surgeons' program.**

I went there in April of '43 and I got through around the middle or end of August. Then, I went back to Alameda and I waited for my other orders which was fleet air. They said there's an air group coming in going to have about a year or so of training and that was it. Most of the people in my air group were veterans from one of the other carriers that went down. They formed the nucleus of this air group which was three squadrons, a fighter, a bomber, and a torpedo bomber squadron. Later, we were given the two Marine squadrons. They were the remnants of Pappy Boyington's group. So, I had two Marine squadrons and three Navy squadrons to take care of. We trained and trained and trained. The toughest part was to get the poor Marine pilots certified to land on carriers because they were all land-based.

**What did you use for practicing then?**

We used the old Ranger. Have you ever heard of the old Ranger?

**Sure.**

Yea, the old Ranger came in and we took the Ranger up and down the coast from San Francisco to San Diego and we tried like hell to get these Marines to learn how to make a landing. They had no problem taking off, but we were close enough to other airports so that if they couldn't get on the ship they'd have a place to land. They wouldn't have to go in the drink. Anyhow, we had a lot of fun getting those guys straight. We got them all certified by the time they got through, but it was tough. In the meantime, our other pilots, before the Ranger came, we lent to several auxiliary fields one in northern California and one in Nevada called Fallon Air Station**.**

**It's still there.**

Yes. Then we marked off parts of the runway to simulate the flight deck of a carrier. And they, those who hadn't been in combat before, learned their carrier landing. By the time, the

Franklin came in, we had a well-trained group of people who could take off and land and do everything that a carrier pilot is supposed to do.

I was their doctor and I took care of them all. The Marines claimed I was a Marine. The Navy guys claimed I was a Navy man. I used to wear two uniforms.

**Two uniforms.**

Well, when I would go to the Marine ready rooms, I'd put on their little Marine uniform and then I'd change quickly and put on my Navy uniform and go to the other one. We had a lot of fun in that respect.

**As their physician, what were you actually doing?**

As their physician, I was everything. I was their father, their mother, their spiritual guide, their social director, their psychiatrist, the whole thing. I had to be like a general practitioner with them. I was well trained in surgery. So, I could take care of the various surgical things they had. They had every once in a while appendectomies to be done. They had primanital(?) cyst. They had hernias that got strangulated. They got fractures sometimes in their training exercises. I took care of everything for them and they considered me their personal physician, every one of them. I was called Dr. Sam and Dr. Sam was their private doctor. No matter what was wrong, I took care of it. I also was able to use the facilities at various places that we were at--like Naval Air Station Alameda or even I had to do appendectomies over at Fallon and I went to Alameda to get surgical supplies and all that kind of stuff. But every place we went, even on board the ship, I was welcomed to use all the facilities in the medical departments there. I took care of everything no matter what it was.

**The Franklin came in. That was in '43?**

Franklin came in in early '45.

**'45?**

Right. It had been in Bremerton being repaired after it got busted up in the battle of Leyte.

**That's right.**

It got hit by a kamikaze there and so it was at Bremerton. Anyhow, it came in early in '45 and we had a little work to do to get everything on it. We took off I think about mid-February of '45 and went to Pearl first. That's where we took on O'Callahan. He had been the chaplain previously.

**Well, he had been on the Ranger too.**

I knew him in Pensacola when the Ranger was there. The Ranger was used then for flight training take off and landing. He was on the Ranger and he and I became very good friends there. When I saw him again in Pearl, it was like a reunion. He was quite a guy that guy.

**I was going to ask you about him, what kind of a man he was.**

Tell you all about. But anyhow, then after we were in Pearl for a while and we went out and we practiced allowing the destroyers to use our pilots, who were towing targets, for target practice. We sent a bunch of our pilots out off the islands there and the destroyers would shoot

down the targets there and that made them very, very effective. I never saw anything in combat as effective as the anti-aircraft fire from the destroyers. They were like sharp shooters.

After we got through that training, we headed out for Ulithi. You know where Ulithi is?

**Yes.**

We had a little joke about Ulithi. We said if the world had to have an enema it would be given to Ulithi.

**Wasn't that also a repair station?**

Yes, a repair station. All of Mitscher's fleet was assembled there for the attack on the Japanese islands and also Iwo Jima, and the Okinawa thing. So, we got more organized there. Then, the whole fleet took off. It took us about 5 or 6 days to go off to the coast of Japan where we were making the attacks on the islands there.

**Several waves had already gone off the previous day before the attack on the Franklin.**

Yes. On the previous day, most of our guys had made some sorties. Then on the morning of March 19, we had 38 of our bombers take off escorted by about 9 of our fighter planes and there were other fighter planes flying air cover for the carrier when all of a sudden out of nowhere...I was standing right on the flight deck. My battle station was right in the middle of the flight deck because I had to wear a helmet with a big white cross on it and a big white cross on the back of my coat that I had all my supplies in so the pilots when they took off and when they landed they knew that their doctor was there in case something happened.

I was standing right there in the middle of the flight deck when all of a sudden out of nowhere, we didn't even have any indication. There was nothing on radar or sonar or anything that showed there was an enemy plane coming in. This little guy came in right under our air cover and dropped two armor-piercing right in the middle of our flight deck.

**Did you actually see him coming?**

Oh yea, sure, sure. There was nothing I could do but stay there and take it. I was blown about 15 feet up in the air against the steel bulkhead for the island structure. I got up kind of groggy and dizzy and saw all the fire. Immediately, all these planes that were lined up to take off they were all equipped, most our dive bombers, with this new "Tiny Tim" rocket which was about a hundred times more powerful than the regular bombs.

**Yes, it was an armor-piercing warhead wasn't it?**

Yes, and it was terribly explosive and they were right at the bottom of the wings of all the planes and when the fires started and the explosions, they fell off and they started to explode and go across the flight deck on their own.

**So, their motors ignited.**

Yes, their motors ignited. That's what they did. A lot of us were just ducking those things, but it was pandemonium and chaos for hours and hours. We had 126 separate explosions all on that ship; and each explosion would pick the ship up and rock it and then turn it around a little bit. How any of us kept ourselves from falling off the flight deck into the ocean I don't know. I lost my glasses and I lost my shoes. I was wearing a pair of kind of moccasin shoes. I

didn't have time that morning to put on my flight deck shoes and they just went right off immediately.

**So, you're running around the deck bare-footed at this point?**

Like the boy who was on the burning deck. His feet were full of blisters. In the fire, he lost his pants and had to wear his sisters, remember that? Anyhow, I was running around with just my socks and I hit the deck. The deck was hotter than hell, but there was no way I could get another pair of shoes.

I looked around to see if I had any corpsmen and most of them had been blown over board, some, I was told, got panicky and jumped over board. Now, why they wanted to jump over board in those waters which were just ice cold. You know, the coast of Japan in March was almost like the Arctic. It was so cold. You couldn't stand on that flight without your ears and nose freezing. None of us had any equipment for that because we were not told what we were going to be exposed to.

I didn't have any corpsmen that I could find, but fortunately I found some of the members of the band that I had trained.

**There were other members of the crew that you had given first aid training to?**

The band mostly.

**Oh, the musical.**

The musical band I had given first-aid. Then, also my air group pilots and some of the crew I had given first-aid training to. A lot of them were assembled on the flight deck waiting for their planes to take off. A lot of the pilots got blown out of the cockpits when the bombs dropped. Anyhow, the first guy I latched onto was the skipper of the fighter squadron. He was a veteran of the Lexington and the Yorktown.

**Boy, he had some experience with this kind of thing.**

This guy had three Navy Crosses. So, he was no amateur. I'd like you to contact him if you get a chance for verification of some of the things I'm telling you. He was Annapolis. Of course, he's retired now. After he left the Navy, he became a lawyer in Connecticut and then later a judge and then later retired to Hilton Head, SC. I talk to him on the telephone every once and a while. He's a wonderful guy. His name is MacGregor Kilpatrick. He lives at 28 Spartino Point, Hilton Head, SC 20926. His phone number is (803) 837-3279. He can give you some very large stories of the whole business because he stayed with me, helping me take care of the wounded. We were fighting fires and we were tossing bombs over board along with our good friend the chaplain. He stayed with me until the order came from above saying that all air group personnel had to leave and go on board the Santa Fe which was tied up along side of us. I couldn't find any doctors. There were three ship's doctors assigned to the Franklin.

**Yes, Dr. Fox and Dr. Fueling.**

Fox, Fueling, and Kurt Smith. I found out later that Fox was instantly killed because his assignment for general quarters was in the sick bay. The concussion was so great there that he got killed immediately. Fueling and Kurt Smith were trapped below in the warrant officer's wardroom where their assignment was, and it took 12 or 13 hours to get them out. That's where

LT Gary got his Medal of Honor for finding an escape route for them. But I didn't have any medical help whatsoever. I looked and looked and looked.

**You didn't have any corpsmen at all at that point?**

Finally, they got a couple who were down below in the hanger deck once they recovered from their concussions and their shock and everything else. We got them up. Little by little a few of them came up. Originally, the band was my medical help and what pilots I had around.

**As far as equipment.**

I was well prepared. From the time we left San Francisco and then stopped at Pearl and then to Ulithi and so forth, I had done what we call disaster planning. At San Francisco, I was very much involved in that prior to the war. I had been working at the emergency hospital service and trauma centers and so forth. I had big metal cans, like garbage cans, bolted down all over the flight deck and the hanger deck full of everything that I needed--splints, burn dressings, sterile dressings of all sorts, sterile surgical instruments, medications, plasma, intravenous solutions other than plasma. Just about everything I needed. They were all around there and I had no problems.

**They were all in sealed garbage cans.**

They were not garbage cans. They were big, metal equivalents of garbage cans in terms of size. They were covered and they were bolted down so that they were accessible and they wouldn't get knocked around. I had all the equipment and dressings I needed and most of the stuff I needed was for the treatment of burns and fractures, lacerations, and bleeding.

**At that point had you had all the patients you needed?**

Oh boy, I had hundreds and hundreds of them. Then the flight surgeon who was assigned to the flight deck had a specially equipped coat that the ship gave me. Have you ever been duck hunting with those coats that the duck hunters use?

**With the little pouches in it?**

I had one of those. I had pouches all over with a couple of extra sized belts similar to big money belts that I carried my morphine syrettes in and other things. So, I had everything I needed. I had no problem whatsoever. The only thing was that there was no sterile gloves. I wouldn't have been able to get them on and off anyhow. But in those days the Navy had a special burn dressing which was very effective. It was a gauge impregnated with vaseline and some chemicals that were almost like local anesthetics. I would wrap these burn dressings around these guys with the help of my band people or whatever corpsmen I had. That was the thing that I had to do. A lot of bleeding I had to stop. I had to even do a couple of minor amputations because the debris consisting of large steel things jarred down and pinned people down and because they were too heavy they couldn't lift them. So we had to do some amputations. Sometimes of some fingers and sometimes some toes.

The most important thing for me to do was what they call triage. In other words, separate the serious wounded from the not so serious wounded. We arrange for evacuation of these people, who I couldn't handle any longer because I didn't have the equipment, to the Santa Fe which had a very well equipped sick bay.

So, we rigged up two ways of getting them over there. We had all kinds of stretchers available. I had them stashed all over the place. We got a big plank, I don't know where we got it but we did, and put it between the Franklin and the Santa Fe. This is where MacGregor Kilpatrick came in. He helped me organize all of this and we got people to carry the real badly wounded. Some of them had there hips blown off and arms blown off and all of that kind of junk. We got all of them on the Santa Fe. Then, we rigged up breaches(?) boyee(?) with a wrench and ropes and so forth and some of them who couldn't walk, when we had run out of stretchers we put them in there and got them over there. I think we evacuated all together 600 people to the Santa Fe. Most of them were wounded and the rest were the air group personnel who were on board. The orders came that all air group personnel had to go on the Santa Fe because they considered air group personnel nonexpendable. They had to live to fight again in their airplanes. So, when the order came, the Air Group Officer of the Franklin sent MacGregor Kilpatrick and myself who were standing there supervising the evacuation between fighting fires and taking care of the wounded and so forth.

He said, "You two people get your ass as fast as you can." MacGregor being an Annapolis graduate knew he had to obey the order, but he argued and argued and argued. But this guy wouldn't take his arguments.

He said, "Get over there. You know better." Then he said to me, "You get over there too."

I said, "Who's going to take care of these people?"

He said, "We'll manage."

I said, "Nope. All my life I've been trained never to abandon a sick or wounded person. I can't find any doctors and I don't know where they are and I have scarcity of corpsmen and I can't leave these people."

He said, "You better go because a military order is a military order."

I said, "Well what could happen to me if I don't go?"

He replied, "I could shoot you or I could bring court-martial charges against you."

I said, "Well, take your choice and I went back to work."

And as MacGregor Kilpatrick left he said to me, "Sam you're crazy."

**What a story?**

I looked at that ship and I looked at the fires and I felt the explosions. I thought, well, I better say good-bye right now mentally to my family because I never thought that ship was ever going to survive. The orders had been given by the departing admirals Bogen and Davis to scuttle the ship and abandon the ship. There was one guy on the ship who really deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor and he wasn't even mentioned. He was the navigator Steve Jurika. He said we can save this ship. If the rest of you guys want to leave, all I need is a small group of guys to help me. We can save this ship. He said, we've got the fires pretty much under control and the explosions are subsiding and he said we can save it. The exec and a few others said okay. Finally, the captain, reluctantly, said okay I'll stay too.

**His name was Gary?**

Gehris. He was a very interesting man. Originally in World War I, he was a "mustang", an enlisted man. He went up through the ranks and he became a Commodore on the Aleutians. He had also become a naval pilot. When he got ants in his pants and wanted to fly and there wasn't that much flying around the Aleutians because the weather was so terrible, he finally

badgered the people to give him command of a carrier. They said you'll have to be reduced in rank. So, he took a reduction from commodore to captain to get the Franklin's command. He was quite a guy--kind of a complicated, mixed up guy. But he stayed with the ship and the rest of us stayed with the ship.

As far as the other guy, the Air Group Officer, who said he could either shoot me or court-martial me, he didn't shoot me and as far as a court-martial were concerned, he talked a lot about it in the next seven days but everybody in higher rank on the ship poo-pooed him and made him sound like a damned fool. So, he stopped the threats.

**After you had this confrontation and the air group evacuated the ship. You were still there with all these patients. What did you do then?**

I stayed there until the ship got to Ulithi which was seven days later.

**At this point the ship was dead in the water wasn't it?**

Dead in the water.

**Fifty miles off the coast of Japan.**

Fifty miles off the coast and the Pittsburgh was trying to tow us. They were putting a line on us and that took hours and hours. It was almost 12 to 14 hours before the doctors who were trapped below were rescued. By that time, I had the majority of the wounded taken care of and the chaplain and I went ahead and took care of the dead and we didn't need the other doctors because our work was all done. Most importantly, over the next seven days we tried to find trapped injured people in various parts of the ship--like the hanger deck and some of the other places--that hadn't been discovered. We got them out and treated them and kept them comfortable.

Then the burial of the dead was terrible. We had over 800 dead. They were all over the ship. The two ships' medical officers put the burial functions on my shoulders. I had to declare them dead, take off their identifications, remove, along with the chaplains help, whatever possessions that hadn't been destroyed on them, and then slide them over board because we had no way of keeping them. So, we buried I think it was about 832 people in the next seven days.

**What a heartbreaking job that must've been.**

Well, a lot of them were my own air group people--pilots and aircrew--and I could recognize them even if the bodies busted up and charred and everything else. That was terrible, really terrible to bury that many people. But we did it.

**Tell me about Chaplain O'Callahan.**

Chaplin O'Callahan was a very, very wonderful person as you know from what you've read. He never had a parish when he got through with his Jesuit training but he taught at Boston University and other places. He taught logic and ethics and all those kinds of things. He was sort of a great esoteric guy and very nervous, a little bit of a neurotic. He attached himself to me because I kept reassuring him that he didn't have anything wrong with him except the usual apprehension of anyone going into combat. That didn't worry him because he had a lot of courage and he liked a little nip or so. Since I was the air group flight surgeon, I was the only guy on board ship who had the authority and the access to anything in the way of liquor.

**Medicinal alcohol.**

We used to have what they use now on airplanes. Those little one and a half ounce things that they give you your drinks on?

**Yes.**

I had three or four hundred of those because I was allowed, when I had a pilot to debrief or to check over, to give him a drink. We had Brandy and Bourbon and Scotch and Gin and so forth. The pockets of my big coat which was like a hunting jacket had four or five dozens of those in there along with morphine syrettes and so forth. I'd give him one of those every once and a while. I'll tell you I never saw a person rise to the occasion like he did. Years ago I read a little article which said that the only thing good about war is that ribbon clerks can become heroes.

He just rose to the occasion. He was fearless and he inspired all the rest of us to just follow his act and do what we had to do. He was great. Everything that you read in that book about him was absolutely true. He became not only then my best friend but after the war, after he got mustered out, he came to San Francisco and stayed with us. I met him also prior to the end of the war when he was on a war bond selling tour when I was Portland. I had another carrier assigned to me there being outfitted, ready to go into action. He looked me up and we went all over the Northwest selling war bonds. It was a great experiences because every time he talked to an audience he said, "You know I got the Congressional Medal of Honor but the bigger hero on the ship was Dr. Sam here." He didn't have to stay. He stayed anyhow and it inspired the rest of us to continue to work. But we had a lot of good times together in the Pacific northwest.

**He said you called him "Rabbi Tim."**

I called him Rabbi Tim. Father Joe was the Catholics. They called him "Father Joe." I was "Dr. Sam" and he was "Rabbi Tim." We had a few Jewish boys on board. We didn't have a Jewish chaplain. We had a Protestant one, Gatlin, who was a wonderful guy.

**Gats. They called him Gats.**

Gatlin. He was great too. Rabbi Tim took care of the non-Protestants and non-Catholics. I used to help him with the services every once and while. The guy who was really his altar boy was Dr. Fox. He was a Catholic. When he wasn't available, he used to call me to help him with the services. We used to get teased a lot, but I said I always wanted to be an altar boy.

**I bet you never thought you'd ever be an altar boy when you were growing up.**

Well, I was raised in Stockton where the best friends I had were kids at the Catholic school. I used to play basketball with them. I had good friends among the nuns and the priest there. As a matter-of-fact, when I was still in college, I was made an honorary member of the Knights of Columbus.

**Really?**

So, I had no problem at all adapting to Catholicism although I was Jewish. But we had good feelings among us all.

**When you were up on the deck there of the Franklin that first day after the attack, did Father O'Callahan come up there with you at that point?**

The chaplain and the flight surgeon were officially assigned general quarters to the flight deck during combat. Gatlin was down below in the hanger deck. He made his way up because there was nothing he could do down there. He was right with me. Those guys wanted to see their spiritual guide and their medical man right on the flight deck. We had to be very well exposed to them.

**So, you two were acting as a team up there.**

We were a team from day one.

**After you were towed, how many days did it take to get to Ulithi?**

I can't remember exactly but I think it was around seven days because we were only making about four knots. I forgot to tell you a very interesting story. The engineering officers tried to get the boilers going down in the engine room. The smoke was so bad that we had to get the Santa Fe to give us a whole batch of gas mask which we sent down deck, but that didn't cover their eyes. Their eyes were so inflamed from the smoke that they couldn't see to do their work. So, the exec came down and said to me, "Do you know where there is any anesthetic eye drops to put in their eyes so they can tolerate smoke?"

I said, "Yes, I know where they are." I knew there was a whole stash of them down in the sick bay because I used to have to take foreign bodies out of the eyes of my pilots and some the crew.

He asked, "Could you go down there (that's about four or five decks below), get it and give it to the engineering officer."

I said, "Sure give me a flashlight and a guide because I may not be able to see my way down there although I used to go down three or four times a day."

I went down there and got a whole batch of them. They were in eyedropper bottles and we gave them to these guys. They put them in their eyes and immediately they could tolerate the smoke. That enabled them to get the boilers going.

So, after they got partially completed in that we were making four knots. Finally, we got up to about 10 and then 12 and then 14. When we got to 14, we cast off the Pittsburgh because we didn't want them tied up to us because they were going to be sitting ducks too. We had five destroyers assigned to us that kept circling us all the time from the time we left the coast of Japan until we got to Ulithi because we were under constant attack by Japanese bombers.

**So, it was really a miracle the fact that you were sitting there first dead in the water for hours and hours and you were right in 15 minutes of the coast by plane.**

Oh, 5 minutes maybe.

**And probably a big pole of smoke going up in the air marking where you were and they never got through again.**

What little anti-aircraft batteries we had left and the destroyers which kept circling us all the time, they shot down 58 Japanese attack planes.

**Fifty-eight. All probably heading for you.**

All for us. They weren't going to go to the other carriers in the task force because they had air combat guys circling them and they had damned good anti-aircraft. They figured we were sitting ducks.

**You were fairly defenseless except for the air cover and the destroyers.**
The air cover and the destroyers really saved us.

**So, did you get off of the ship at Ulithi?**
At Ulithi I got word that a lot of my people who were taken off, picked up in the water and so forth, were on a hospital ship that was in Ulithi. I got a ride to the hospital ship and saw them and I was told by these people that they had got word that they remnants of the air group--mostly Navy pilots because we lost almost all of the Marines; they were in their ready rooms waiting to take off when they bombs exploded and that was on the hanger deck. Most of them were killed. I have a list of dead Marines which makes your heart sink.

I heard that the remnants of the Navy pilots were all rendezvoused on Guam. Then, they had got word to one of the destroyers that I was still alive and they wanted me back on Guam. So, I took my story to the chaplain, to the exec, and to the skipper of the ship and he said well we'd like to have you go to Pearl and then after that where ever they're going to send us with us because we kind of consider you ship's company now. But my air group needed me. So, they said okay. They wrote orders and they got me by way of outrigger canoe and a little launch to another airfield some distance away from Ulithi and they put me on a DC-3, which is the R-4D, of the Navy and got me to Guam where I rejoined my air group just in time to keep the poor derelicts from getting assigned to another carrier.

**Where did they go from there?**
The air group commander wanted to make captain so bad, he was a three-striper, that he volunteered these boys for another carrier unnamed as yet. Most of these guys were veterans of the Yorktown and the Lexington, including some of younger ones who just came on. A lot of them had been blown in the water and all that kind of stuff.

So, they called for a hearing in Guam because the skipper of the bombing squadron went to the skipper of the fighting squadron and said he didn't think these guys were psychologically or physically qualified to go back into combat at that particular time and he needed his flight surgeon to verify that, support that. I came in the day before the hearing. I assembled them all and checked them all and did reviews with them and everything else and I agreed. Some of them looked like death warmed over. So, at the hearing which was conducted by ADM Nimitz, I just gave a medical opinion.

**So, ADM Nimitz was there?**
He conducted the hearing.

**He was right there in the room?**
Yes. Right there. He was the chief hearing officer. He remembered me from Alameda because I pulled him out of the trench when his Sikorsky crashed on the landing there in '42. He just said, "Unless I hear a medical opinion to the contrary I have to agree with CDR Sherman". Then he said all the air group should be sent back to the States and they should be rehabilitated

as much as possible and what assignments they should have in the future should depend upon what they're physical emotional state should be.

**Was this about April or May of '45?**

This was early in April '45. So, they put us on a little jeep carrier and they sent us first to Pearl where we got reunited with the Franklin group that was there. They had to repair the ship so that it could make the journey to Brooklyn. We said our good-byes to all these other guys. They went their way and we continued with the jeep to Alameda. Then, they had us go with four or five different places to decide what to do with us. One was up in Washington called Walla Walla. Then the next one was San Point near Seattle. Finally, they just went ahead a shipped the guys to different places in the States. I was given what I wanted--senior medical officer of a carrier, the Rendova, which was still outfitting in Portland in the (? name of Navy Yard at Portland) Naval yards there.

**Was that at Bremerton?**

No, that was at Portland.

**Maine?**

No, Portland, Oregon.

**On the river.**

Yes, right on the river. We got the thing outfitted and almost ready for sea duty trials when the war ended. That was the end.

**How long did you stay in the Navy after that?**

To about November. I guess I finally got mustered out about Christmas time. They put me on another carrier, I've forgotten the name of it, that was doing some work in the Straits of Juan de Fuca off of Washington and we were going up to British Columbia and so forth and they had me come on there. They didn't have a surgeon. They had a couple of docs who were sort of generalists. I did some surgery on that one. Then when I got to Vancouver, British Columbia, the orders came on that I could separated from the service and I was taken by launch to Vancouver and then back to Portland and then back to San Francisco and I got mustered out. I guess that was towards the end of the year.

**You went back to San Francisco then.**

Went back to San Francisco and got mustered out there. This was the same place that inducted me into the Navy.

**So, you ended up where you started.**

Ended up where I started. The only sad part about it is that I couldn't find a place to practice after that. I told you about this Dr. Herman you know. I was at one of the most prestigious medical buildings in San Francisco--490 Post--for almost 10 years and they promised my wife who told them when I would get separated from the service. When Dr. Sam gets through he can have anything he wants. I got back and they looked at me with tears in their eyes and said the war ended too soon. The building is over sold. We haven't got an inch of space. So, I had to go all around town and finally I found this little lady doctor who was willing to share her office with me until I was able to find permanent quarters.

**Then, you stayed in private practice then?**

I stayed in practice and resumed my practice. I continued until I retired about 10 years ago.

**So, what are you doing in your retirement?**

I keep busy. I have a lot of official duties in the various medical associations--the county, the state, and the American Medical Association. I served on their most important committees. I've been past President of the California Medical Association in San Francisco. I have been chairman of all the important committees of the American Medical Association and a member of their ruling bodies and House of Delegates. I keep working with them and I work with most of the voluntary health agencies here in San Francisco--The Cancer Society, The Heart Association, The Mental Health Association. Then, I've gotten lots of assignments on the Federal level. When Medicare went into effect, I became a member of the committee that had to promulgate all of the regulations to implement it. That took me about five years. Then I helped in manpower in Federal committees. I just keep busy.

Then about seven years ago, my wife and I were in a very horrible automobile accident. She was almost killed. It was one of those tragical things. I was not badly hurt, but I was a little bit busted up. She became almost a semi-invalid and I became a care giver and a house husband. I learned how to do things that I never did before in my life.

**How is she now?**

She's good now. She just had the final surgery on her knee. Both knees were busted up and had to be replaced. They couldn't do anything sooner because her heart and lungs were crushed in the accident. They didn't think she could stand general anesthetic and surgery. So, they just let her hobble along. I'm gradually giving her back most of her household chores--not all because I like what I'm doing.

**Are you active at all in the <u>Franklin</u> organization?**

No. They've invited me to their reunions and everything else but those things started about the time of this accident seven years ago and I couldn't leave her home and even I couldn't travel because I got kind of busted up. So, I never did go to one of their reunions but I kept in contact with them all the time. So, I knew Bob St.Peters and a lot of the other people. I did go to a couple of my air group reunions because they were in the immediate vicinity here. The bomber squadrons had a union and I get invited to all the <u>Franklin</u> reunions. They had a reunion in Orange County last month to dedicate a park in memory and honor of LT Gary, who got the Medal of Honor. Red Morgan and Steve Jurika went and I was on the phone with the both of them because they wanted me to come there. They're after me to try to get my Navy Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor. They feel that I got shortchanged and that I got discriminated against because I disobeyed a Naval military order. I said well, I don't think the Navy Cross is chopped liver. That's pretty heroic. But a lot of them including my pilots have been after the Navy and after the local Congress people here from San Francisco to look in to see whether or not it's possible. I said if you want to do it, go ahead, but it's almost 50 years after the fact.

**Well, it certainly sounds like quite an episode in your life.**

I'll tell you. It's the greatest episode in my life. Four years to do something I was exposed to just changed my whole attitude on life and everything else. I'll never forget the Navy.

I'll always be indebted to the Navy. I'll always love the Navy. I enjoyed everything that the Navy asked me to do and gave me.

**I'd like to put you on the mailing list of NAVY MEDICINE so you can get copies.**

I'm trying to remember who was in BUMED in charge of Navy Medical personnel. Was it ADM Adams?

**Adams. He was a captain.**

Yes, CAPT Adams. He came out to Alameda because his best friend was CAPT Iverson who was senior medical officer there. He was a Navy Cross recipient from World War I. I met CAPT Adams and we had quite a lot of personal correspondence. He's the one who got me my carrier that I wasn't able to serve on. I guess he's long gone now. You know all the good friends are gone. Gerhis came to visit me and he died shortly afterwards. O'Callahan came to visit me and he died shortly afterwards.

**In fact, I think Mr. St.Peters said when he was up in New England some years ago, he'd stopped in to see Father O'Callahan. He said he hadn't looked well and he wasn't the same man that he remembered. He was kind of shuffling.**

Yes, he had had a couple of minor strokes.

**But he said as soon as he opened his mouth it was the same man.**

He was a great guy and I went to visit his mother when I was in Boston after the war. I went to the lady clinic for some post-graduate surgical training and I knew his mother lived just a short distance away. So, I went to visit her and she said you know my son isn't the same.

Well, we went through a harrowing experience and he wasn't a rugged individual and I guess it took its toll on him.

**I guess having to minister to all those men.**

The tears would roll down his eyes as he was giving the last rites to them.

**Isn't there that famous photograph of him on the deck of the Franklin?**

And I was standing right in back of him on that photograph.